



As two men await certain death, a soldier bayonets those at his feet. (October 1965)

**"...in four months,
five times as many
people died in
Indonesia as in
Vietnam in
twelve years."**

-- Bertrand Russell, 1966

The following article appeared in the Spartanburg, South Carolina *Herald-Journal* on May 19, 1990, then in the *San Francisco Examiner* on May 20, 1990, the *Washington Post* on May 21, 1990, and the *Boston Globe* on May 23, 1990. The version below is from the *Examiner*.

Ex-agents say CIA compiled death lists for Indonesians

**After 25 years, Americans speak of their
role in exterminating Communist Party**

by Kathy Kadane, States News Service, 1990

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. government played a significant role in one of the worst massacres of the century by supplying the names of thousands of Communist Party leaders to the Indonesian army, which hunted down the leftists and killed them, former U.S. diplomats say.

For the first time, U.S. officials acknowledge that in 1965 they systematically compiled comprehensive lists of Communist operatives, from top echelons down to village cadres. As many as 5,000 names were furnished to the Indonesian army, and the Americans later checked off the names of those who had been killed or captured, according to the U.S. officials.

The killings were part of a massive bloodletting that took an estimated 250,000 lives.

The purge of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) was part of a U.S. drive to ensure that Communists did not come to power in the largest country in Southeast Asia, where the United States was already fighting an undeclared war in Vietnam. Indonesia is the fifth most-populous country in the world.

Silent for a quarter-century, former senior U.S. diplomats and CIA officers described in lengthy interviews how they aided Indonesian President Suharto, then army leader, in his attack on the PKI.

"It really was a big help to the army," said Robert J. Martens, a former member of the U.S. Embassy's political section who is now a consultant to the State Department. "They probably killed a lot of people, and I probably have a lot of blood on my hands, but that's not all bad. There's a time when you have to strike hard at a decisive moment."

White House and State Department spokesmen declined comment on the disclosures.

Although former deputy CIA station chief Joseph Lazarsky and former diplomat Edward Masters, who was Martens' boss, said CIA agents contributed in drawing up the death lists, CIA spokesman Mark Mansfield said, "There is no substance to the allegation that the CIA was involved in the preparation and/or distribution of a list that was used to track down and kill PKI members. It is simply not true."

Indonesian Embassy spokesman Makarim Wibisono said he had no personal knowledge of events described by former U.S. officials. "In terms of fighting the Communists, as far as I'm concerned, the Indonesian people fought by themselves to eradicate the Communists," he said.

Martens, an experienced analyst of communist affairs, headed an embassy group of State Department and CIA officers that spent two years compiling the lists. He later delivered them to an army intermediary.

People named on the lists were captured in overwhelming numbers, Martens said, adding, "It's a big part of the reason the PKI has never come back."

The PKI was the third-largest Communist Party in the world, with an estimated 3 million members. Through affiliated organizations such as labor and youth groups it claimed the loyalties of another 17 million.

In 1966 the Washington Post published an estimate that 500,000 were killed in the purge and the brief civil war it triggered. In a 1968 report, the CIA estimated there had been 250,000 deaths, and called the carnage "one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century."

U.S. Embassy approval

Approval for the release of the names came from the top U.S. Embassy officials, including former Ambassador Marshall Green, deputy chief of mission Jack Lydman and political section chief Edward Masters, the three acknowledged in interviews.

Declassified embassy cables and State Department reports from early October 1965, before the names were turned over, show that U.S. officials knew Suharto had begun roundups of PKI cadres, and that the embassy had unconfirmed reports that firing squads were being formed to kill PKI prisoners.

Former CIA Director William Colby, in an interview, compared the embassy's campaign to identify the PKI leadership to the CIA's Phoenix Program in Vietnam. In 1965, Colby was the director of the CIA's Far East division and was responsible for directing U.S. covert strategy in Asia.

"That's what I set up in the Phoenix Program in Vietnam -- that I've been kicked around for a lot," he said. "That's exactly what it was. It was an attempt to identify the structure" of the Communist Party.

Phoenix was a joint U.S.-South Vietnamese program set up by the CIA in December 1967 that aimed at neutralizing members of the National Liberation Front, the Vietcong political cadres. It was widely criticized for alleged human rights abuses.

"You shoot them"

"The idea of identifying the local apparatus was designed to -- well, you go out and get them to surrender, or you capture or you shoot them," Colby said of the Phoenix Program. "I mean, it was a war, and they were fighting. So it was really aimed at providing intelligence for operations rather than a big picture of the thing."

In 1962, when he took over as chief of the CIA's Far East division, Colby said he discovered the United States did not have comprehensive lists of PKI activists. Not having the lists "could have been criticized as a gap in the intelligence system," he said, adding they were useful for "operation planning" and provided a picture of how the party was organized. Without such lists, he said, "you're fighting blind."

Asked if the CIA had been responsible for sending Martens, a foreign service officer, to Jakarta in 1963 to compile the lists, Colby said, "Maybe, I don't know. Maybe we did it. I've forgotten."

The lists were a detailed who's-who of the leadership of the party of 3 million members, Martens said. They included names of provincial, city and other local PKI committee members, and leaders of the "mass organizations," such as the PKI national labor federation, women's and youth groups.

Better information

"I know we had a lot more information" about the PKI "than the Indonesians themselves," Green said. Martens "told me on a number of occasions that ... the government did not have very good information on the Communist setup, and he gave me the impression that this information was superior to anything they had."

Masters, the embassy's political section chief, said he believed the army had lists of its own, but they were not as comprehensive as the American lists. He said he could not remember whether the decision to release the names had been cleared with Washington.

The lists were turned over piecemeal, Martens said, beginning at the top of the communist organization. Martens supplied thousands of names to an Indonesian emissary over a number of months, he said. The emissary was an aide to Adam Malik, an Indonesian minister who was an ally of Suharto in the attack on the Communists.

Interviewed in Jakarta, the aide, Tirta Kentjana ("Kim") Adhyatman, confirmed he had met with Martens and received lists of thousands of names, which he in turn gave to Malik. Malik passed them on to Suharto's headquarters, he said.

"Shooting list"

Embassy officials carefully recorded the subsequent destruction of the PKI organization. Using Martens' lists as a guide, they checked off names of captured and assassinated PKI leaders, tracking the steady dismantling of the party apparatus, former U.S. officials said.

Information about who had been captured and killed came from Suharto's headquarters, according to Joseph

Lazarsky, deputy CIA station chief in Jakarta in 1965. Suharto's Jakarta headquarters was the central collection point for military reports from around the country detailing the capture and killing of PKI leaders, Lazarsky said.

"We were getting a good account in Jakarta of who was being picked up," Lazarsky said. "The army had a 'shooting list' of about 4,000 or 5,000 people."

Detention centers were set up to hold those who were not killed immediately.

"They didn't have enough goon squads to zap them all, and some individuals were valuable for interrogation," Lazarsky said. "The infrastructure was zapped almost immediately. We knew what they were doing. We knew they would keep a few and save them for the kangaroo courts, but Suharto and his advisers said, if you keep them alive, you have to feed them."

Masters, the chief of the political section, said, "We had these lists" constructed by Martens, "and we were using them to check off what was happening to the party, what the effect" of the killings "was on it."

Lazarsky said the checkoff work was also carried out at the CIA's intelligence directorate in Washington.

Leadership destroyed

By the end of January 1966, Lazarsky said, the checked-off names were so numerous the CIA analysts in Washington concluded the PKI leadership had been destroyed.

"No one cared, as long as they were Communists, that they were being butchered," said Howard Federspiel, who in 1965 was the Indonesia expert at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. "No one was getting very worked up about it."

Asked about the checkoffs, Colby said, "We came to the conclusion that with the sort of Draconian way it was carried out, it really set them" -- the communists -- "back for years."

Asked if he meant the checkoffs were proof that the PKI leadership had been caught or killed, he said, "Yeah, yeah, that's right, ... the leading elements, yeah."

More from Kathy Kadane...

A Letter to the Editor, New York Review of Books, April 10, 1997

To the Editors:

I very much admired Ms. Laber's piece on Indonesian politics and the origins of the Soeharto regime. In connection with her assertion that little is known about a CIA (or US) role in the 1965 coup and the army massacre that followed, I would like to make your readers aware of a compelling body of evidence about this

that is publicly available, but the public access to it is little known.

It consists of a series of on-the-record, taped interviews with the men who headed the US embassy in Jakarta or were at high levels in Washington agencies in 1965. I published a news story based on the interviews in *The Washington Post* ("U.S. Officials' Lists Aided Indonesian Bloodbath in '60s," May 21, 1990), and have since transferred the tapes, my notes, and a small collection of documents, including a few declassified cables on which the story was based, to the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C. The Archive is a nongovernmental research institute and library, located at the George Washington University.

The former officials interviewed included Ambassador Marshall Green, Deputy Chief of Mission Jack Lydman, Political Counsellor (later Ambassador) Edward E. Masters, Robert Martens (an analyst of the Indonesian left working under Masters' supervision), and (then) director of the Central Intelligence Agency's Far East division, William Colby.

The tapes, along with notes of conversations, show that the United States furnished critical intelligence -- the names of thousands of leftist activists, both Communist and non-Communist -- to the Indonesian Army that were then used in the bloody manhunt.

There were other details that illustrate the depth of US involvement and culpability in the killings which I learned from former top-level embassy officials, but have not previously published. For example, the US provided key logistical equipment, hastily shipped in at the last minute as Soeharto weighed the risky decision to attack. Jeeps were supplied by the Pentagon to speed troops over Indonesia's notoriously bad roads, along with "dozens and dozens" of field radios that the Army lacked. As Ms. Laber noted, the US (namely, the Pentagon) also supplied "arms." Cables show these were small arms, used for killing at close range.

The supply of radios is perhaps the most telling detail. They served not only as field communications but also became an element of a broad, US intelligence-gathering operation constructed as the manhunt went forward. According to a former embassy official, the Central Intelligence Agency hastily provided the radios -- state-of-the-art Collins KWM-2s, high-frequency single-sideband transceivers, the highest-powered mobile unit available at that time to the civilian and commercial market. The radios, stored at Clark Field in the Philippines, were secretly flown by the US Air Force into Indonesia. They were then distributed directly to Soeharto's headquarters -- called by its acronym KOSTRAD -- by Pentagon representatives. The radios plugged a major hole in Army communications: at that critical moment, there were no means for troops on Java and the out-islands to talk directly with Jakarta.

While the embassy told reporters the US had no information about the operation, the opposite was true. There were at least two direct sources of information. During the weeks in which the American lists were being turned over to the Army, embassy officials met secretly with men from Soeharto's intelligence unit at regular intervals concerning who had been arrested or killed. In addition, the US more generally had information from its systematic monitoring of Army radios. According to a former US official, the US listened in to the broadcasts on the US-supplied radios for weeks as the manhunt went forward, overhearing, among other things, commands from Soeharto's intelligence unit to kill particular persons at given locations.

The method by which the intercepts were accomplished was also described. The mobile radios transmitted to a large, portable antenna in front of KOSTRAD (also hastily supplied by the US -- I was told it was flown in in a C-130 aircraft). The CIA made sure the frequencies the Army would use were known in advance to the National Security Agency. NSA intercepted the broadcasts at a site in Southeast Asia, where its analysts

subsequently translated them. The intercepts were then sent on to Washington, where analysts merged them with reports from the embassy. The combined reporting, intercepts plus "human" intelligence, was the primary basis for Washington's assessment of the effectiveness of the manhunt as it destroyed the organizations of the left, including, inter alia, the Indonesian Communist Party, the PKI.

A word about the relative importance of the American lists. It appears the CIA had some access prior to 1965 to intelligence files on the PKI housed at the G-2 section of the Indonesian Army, then headed by **Major-General S. Parman**. CIA officials had been dealing with Parman about intelligence concerning the PKI, among other matters, in the years prior to the coup, according to a former US official who was involved (Parman was killed in the coup). The former official, whose account was corroborated by others whom I interviewed, said that the Indonesian lists, or files, were considered inadequate by US analysts because they identified PKI officials at the "national" level, but failed to identify thousands who ran the party at the regional and municipal levels, or who were secret operatives, or had some other standing, such as financier.

When asked about the possible reason for this apparent inadequacy, former US Ambassador Marshall Green, in a December 1989 interview, characterized his understanding this way:

I know that we had a lot more information than the Indonesians themselves.... For one thing, it would have been rather dangerous [for the Indonesian military to construct such a list] because the Communist Party was so pervasive and [the intelligence gatherers] would be fingered...because of the people up the line [the higher-ups, some of whom sympathized with the PKI]. In the [Indonesian] Air Force, it would have been lethal to do that. And probably that would be true for the police, the Marines, the Navy -- in the Army, it depended. My guess is that once this thing broke, the Army was desperate for information as to who was who [in the PKI].

By the end of January 1966, US intelligence assessments comparing the American lists with the reports of those arrested or killed showed the Army had destroyed the PKI. The general attitude was one of great relief: "Nobody cared" about the butchery and mass arrests because the victims were Communists, one Washington official told me.

-- Kathy Kadane

See also:

Peter Dale Scott, "The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965-1967," *Pacific Affairs*, 58, Summer 1985, pp. 239-264. Available at <http://www.namebase.org/scott.html>

and

[Ford Country: Building an Elite for Indonesia](#)

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